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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002439

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: TURKS REPORT MUSLIM ULEMA COUNCIL "BITTER"

REF: A. 04 ANKARA 7042

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1637

Classified By: Acting Counselor for Political-Military Affairs Maggie Nardi for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) On April 27, MFA Head of Department for Iraq Avni Botsali provided PolMilOff with a brief readout of the visit to Ankara by a delegation of the Iraqi Muslim Ulema Council. The delegation, led by MUC Secretary General Dr. Harith al-Dhari, met with FonMin Gul in Ankara on April 27; they then continued on to Istanbul for a conference. Botsali described the delegation's mood as "very bitter." According to Botsali, al-Dhari expressed to Gul the Iraqi Sunni Arabs' willingness to participate in the political process "if the Americans let us." The delegation complained that CF are showing no flexibility on releasing detainees, and that the ISF are "even harsher" than CF.

[1](#)2. (C) The MUC delegation complained that Sunnis are not being allowed to participate in a genuine way, and further that the Iraqi Shias were "cleaning up" (i.e., dismissing non-Shias) in every government office they control. The delegation further claimed that in the KRA and Kirkuk province, Sunni Arabs are effectively barred by the Kurds from purchasing land.

[1](#)3. (C) Botsali reported that while FonMin Gul listened sympathetically to the delegation's complaints, he strongly urged the MUC and the Sunni Arab community writ large to participate in the political process in Iraq. Not to participate would only guarantee a lack of influence over the process, Gul reportedly said.

[1](#)4. (C) Botsali repeated the Turkish position that the GOT wants to continue its outreach to Iraq's Sunni community and wants our support to bolster its credibility with the Sunnis. According to Botsali, if CF were willing to release only a few Sunni detainees, particularly imams, Turkey could leverage this to persuade the Sunnis that there is merit in participation (see ref a).

[1](#)5. (U) Iraq posts minimize considered.  
EDELMAN